

## - CEFS FACTSHEETS –

# Sugar and the Environment

### 1. THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Protection and conservation of the environment is one of the major challenges facing Europe. It is now recognized that the European model of development cannot be based on the depletion of natural resources and the deterioration of our environment. The European Community is trying in this respect, to integrate environmental considerations into all European policies whether they be purely environment, economic or trade.

Environmental action by the Community began in the seventies, with action programmes, based on a vertical and sectional approach to ecological problems. During this period, the Community adopted some 200 pieces of legislation, chiefly concerned with limiting pollution by introducing minimum standards, notably for waste management, water pollution and air pollution. The latest Environment Action Programme (the Sixth such programme); which covers the period 2000-2010 focuses on four priority areas for action : climate change; biodiversity; environment and health; and sustainable management of resources and wastes.

Environment policy is a key component of sustainable development. During recent years, EU Member States agreed on an EU strategy for sustainable development that includes ecological social and economic dimensions. In relation to environment, the strategy sets concrete objectives and a clear timetable for countering climate change, ensuring sustainable transport systems, dealing with threats to public health and the management of natural resources. This is tying into the global discussions on sustainable development and the follow-up to the Rio Summit encompassing the World Summit on Sustainable Development (26 August to 4 September 2002, Johannesburg).

### 2. CEFS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The members of CEFS are firmly committed to the EU environmental and sustainable development policy and believe that the sugar industry makes an important contribution to the EU's initiatives in this area. In recent years, the EU sugar industry has introduced a wide range of measures to further enhance its environmental performance. The EU sugar industry's key objectives in respect of the environment are to ensure a prudent use of natural resources, an effective protection of the environment during the whole production process and the production of valuable by-products in order to minimise waste.

This includes :

#### ➤ **Low use of natural resources**

Lower energy consumption (combined heat and power systems, recovery of methane produced in the digesters during biological water treatment, recycling of vapour from boilers)

Extremely low fresh water consumption (recycled process water, use of condensed water from the extraction process, use of the pulp press water).

➤ **Reduction of Emissions**

Atmospheric emissions (recycling fumes from the dryer or recovering the factory’s flue gases, monitoring and recycling of emissions from the kiln) and Water emissions (biological treatment of water effluents).

➤ **Productive use of by-products**

<b>Beet Pulp</b>	Animal Feed
<b>Molasses</b>	Animal Feed and Raw Material for bio-industry products such as alcohol, yeast and citric acid
<b>Sugar factory lime</b>	Used by Farmers as a Fertiliser
<b>Weed, beet leaves and Beet tails</b>	Animal feed
<b>Soil</b>	Used for agricultural and civil works (topsoil, grass production)
<b>Stones, Sand</b>	For civil works (roads, paths

**The sugar industry and agriculture** – Specific guidelines for good agricultural practices have been introduced in the different countries and are followed by European beet growers. It is also important to recognize that the current method of growing sugar beet in the EU constitutes an important part of a rotational system that safeguards bio-diversity and is a natural barrier against the spreading of diseases. Since beet is a deep-rooting crop and naturally is an excellent nitrogen scavenger, it extracts most of the available nitrogen from the soil allowing fertilizer application rates to be reduced.

The ongoing dialogue between growers and processors is undertaken on a regional, national and European level. This close collaboration ensures the smooth operation of the overall system, with a special regard to the integrated chain management and the environment.

**Sugar industry and society** – Sugar production in Europe is conducted within the framework of rural agriculture. It provides a livelihood for 170.000 European farms and makes an important contribution to the maintenance of the European agricultural model which is based on the protection of the environment; the diversification of rural areas the landscape; an high quality standards for food and feed. Both beet cultivation and processing of the raw material are located in each Member State of the European Union, except Luxembourg, reflecting the sugar sector’s importance for European agriculture.

The European sugar industry contributes towards a varied cultivation of land and ensures that large quantities of sugar do not have to be transported over long distances, but can be produced locally. European sugar thus ranks amongst these “raw materials” which are not only produced in an environmentally sound manner, but are also – from the point of view of avoiding unnecessary transport – produced in close proximity to the consumer.

### 3. SOME USEFUL LINKS

#### DG Environment

- [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/policy\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/policy_en.htm) (Environment Policy Areas)
- <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/index.htm> (Sustainable Development)
- <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/agriculture/index.htm>  
(Environment and Agriculture)

#### DG Agriculture

[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/envir/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/envir/index_en.htm)  
(Agriculture and Environment)

#### DG Enterprise & Industry

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/environment/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/environment/index_en.htm)  
(Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Competitiveness)